

December 2nd 2004

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REPORT

Wiltshire Village Halls Grants Scheme applications 05/06

Summary

Two village halls from the Western Area have applied for funding for the 2005/06 financial period under the Wiltshire Village Halls Grants Programme. Under this scheme Wiltshire County Council provide up to 50% of project costs, district councils provide 20% and the village halls committees are encouraged to raise 30%. It is recommended that the Western Area approve 'In principle' the applications, and agree IN PRINCIPLE the sum of £6,582 from the 05/06 SWAG or discretionary budget. This will enable both projects to be considered for approval and funding at the final meeting of Village Halls Grants Panel on March 14th 2005.

Background to the scheme

Wiltshire is one of the only counties in the south-west that offers a life-line to rural communities in the form of capital grants for new village halls or halls in need of extension or refurbishment. This is very important for the predominantly rural Salisbury District, as Village halls can be the hub of village life, providing venues for village meetings, classes and clubs. The grant is run by Community First, and operates as follows:

- 1) Village Halls committees within Wiltshire apply to the Wiltshire Village Halls Grants Scheme by 1st July each year for major capital projects costing more than £5,000.
- 2) As the money offered by Wiltshire County Council is limited at around £57,000 the scheme is competitive. The Village Halls Grants Panel meets in October to consider the applications in terms of
 - 1) Project costs
 - 2) Whether other funding sources are in place*
 - 3) The urgency of the project
 - 4) Local need for the project
- 3) Between October-March, District Councils must agree in principle their portion of the funding. The village hall committees have this time to ensure their portion of the funding is in place.
- 4) In March, the final approval for the projects is made by the Village Halls Grants Panel – as the scheme is competitive, not all projects from a particular area may be approved.
- 5) During the summer months Community First visit village halls and give expert advice on potential applications to the scheme, financial management of halls, administration and any other issues.

*Wiltshire County Council normally funds each project on a 5:2:3 ratio - e.g. Wiltshire County Council contributes 50% of project costs, district councils contribute 20%, and the village hall committee is encouraged to find 30%. If the hall does not apply for the maximum amount of money, their contribution may be less than 30%, but the funding ratio will always be 5:2 between WCC and SDC.

Because the village halls applications from across the county must be considered on merit rather than by location, the amount of village halls applying from each district can vary considerably year on year. It is therefore difficult to budget for Village Halls projects. Some district councils have allocated a specific annual budget for Village halls, whereas Salisbury decided to use the SWAG and discretionary budget system. Procedures were confirmed with Area Committees in 2003.

Details of the applications

Two village halls from the Western Area have applied to the scheme, as outlined below. Morgans Vale and Woodfalls (Southern Area) has also applied to the grant scheme this year.

	1) Maiden Bradley	2) Hindon
Cost of scheme	£17,596.26	£47,457.00
Local contribution	£3,798 so far, but other funding applications may increase this sum, and so reduce the final amount requested from SDC & WCC in March '05**.	£25,675.00 so far (£12,815 still to find). The owner of an adjacent property has offered £20,000 for the existing kitchen in return for access steps to her garden.
WCC contribution	£10,000 (**may decrease)	£6,405
SDC contribution	£4,000 (**may decrease)	£2,562
SDC contribution: % of total	23% (**may decrease)	5%
Brief outline of project	Disabled ramp, disabled parking areas, accessible toilet facilities. Good local support for project, and improvements will make the hall more marketable and so increase revenue through lettings.	A new kitchen, and toilet facilities including those for the disabled. The improvements are badly needed as the current facilities are beyond their useful life. Good local support.

SDC involvement

The Village Halls Grants Panel is run by Community First, who employs a specialist full-time Village Halls Advisor. One Member and one Officer from each local authority (including Wiltshire) sit on the Village Halls Panel. Salisbury is well represented on the panel. The current Member for Salisbury is Councillor. C. Mills, and the Member for Wiltshire is Councillor. A. Peach.

Implications

- 1) **Financial:** The Western Area is requested to allocate IN PRINCIPLE £6,562.00 from the SWAG or discretionary budget for both schemes, should they be approved by the panel in March. The grant schemes offer SDC good value for money. If both schemes are considered together every £1 given by SDC will be matched by WCC and the village halls by £9.
- 2) **Personnel:** None
- 3) **Human Rights:** The projects will help the halls to comply with new disability access legislation.
- 4) **Community safety:** Village halls provide a legitimate place for groups of young people to meet, a focus for the village, and also a place for village representatives to meet to discuss local issues such as community safety.
- 5) **Legal:** None
- 6) **Wards affected:** Western and Mere; Knoyle

Recommendations

That the Western Area :

- 1) Approve in principle the applications from both village halls

- 2) Agree in principle to allocate £6,562 from the 05/06 budget to ensure that the projects can be put forward to the March Grants Panel for potential approval.